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ABSTRACT

Approaches to equitable performance standards and assessment are discussed with three points of focus. First, the work of the National Education Goals Panel is described, with particular attention to Goal 3, Student Achievement and Citizenship, and the Panel's efforts to establish world-class standards of performance. National standards are assumed to include content standards, student performance standards, school delivery standards, and system performance standards. Second, four possible approaches to standard-setting for students with special needs are presented. They include the following: one standard for everybody; same standard, different conditions; different standards for different groups; and exclusion of some groups from assessment altogether. Potential advantages and disadvantages of each approach are discussed. Third, a discussion of how states are reacting to the national interest in standard-setting and assessments focuses on the standards-based approach to educational improvement adopted in Delaware. The New Directions for Education in Delaware reform plan adopted in May, 1992, clearly defines a strategy of educational standards and related assessments and accountability that will define the nature of educational change needed if Delaware students are to be prepared for life in the 21st century. Four Delaware Curriculum Framework Commissions (English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) participate in the standards development. Contains 7 references. (LB)

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Raising Standards and Measuring Performance Equitably: Challenges for the National Education Goals Panel and State Assessment Systems

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RAISING STANDARDS AND MEASURING PERFORMANCE EQUITABLY: CHALLENGES FOR THE NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL AND STATE ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

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Excellence and equity. These two words should be inseparable in ongoing debates over educational reform. It is difficult to envision how the United States will succeed in raising expectations for student achievement, setting higher standards, and assessing student performance against those standards unless the nation and states also ensure that well-intentioned educational reforms do not adversely affect children—in particular, those who are disadvantaged, from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and those with disabilities.

We are extremely pleased to be invited to this symposium by the Center for Applied Linguistics to discuss issues of educational excellence and equity. Too often these public discussions come after standards are already determined and new assessment instruments are already developed—only then are decisions made about who should be assessed, when they should be assessed, whether different standards should apply to different groups of students, and whether some students should be exempted from testing altogether. Historically, such decisions have not been applied uniformly across states and have not always been made in the best interests of children.

While much debate over national standards and assessment has already taken place, rest assured that the debate is still in its infancy and is far from over. As we speak, Congress is considering whether to adopt legislation authorizing a National Education Standards and Assessment Council (NESAC), which would establish criteria for judging national standards and assessments as "world-class" and coordinate the diverse standard-setting and assessment activities occurring across the country. The U.S. Department of Education has just funded six standard-setting projects in science, history, the arts, civics, geography, and English, to be completed over the next two years. And numerous states are abandoning standardized, multiple-choice, norm-referenced achievement tests in favor of more authentic, criterion-referenced performance assessments to measure what students know and can do.

All of these decision-making bodies—NESAC, those involved in national standard-setting projects, and individual states—will have to face the same issues during the course of their work: how should standards be set for students with special needs? Should limited English proficient, disabled, and disadvantaged students be held to the same standards of performance as other students? Are different accommodations needed to assess them fairly, and if so, what would those accommodations be? What assurances are needed that the national drive to achieve higher standards, more rigorous curricula, and more demanding assessments will not be attained at the expense of students who have not had the same opportunity to learn challenging subject matter? This symposium provides an excellent opportunity for the members of this audience—those most knowledgeable about linguistic and cultural diversity and educational equity—to address these issues and to develop a plan of action to inform and influence educational policy.

Our purpose today is threefold. First, we will present a brief overview of the work of the National Education Goals Panel, paying particular attention to Goal 3, Student Achievement and Citizenship, and the Panel's efforts to establish world-class standards of performance. Second, we hope to lay the groundwork for further discussion by presenting for your consideration four possible approaches to standard-setting for

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students with special needs, along with potential advantages and disadvantages of each approach. Third, we will address how states are reacting to the national interest in standard-setting and assessments by describing the standards-based approach to educational improvement adopted by one state, Delaware.

A Brief History of the National Education Goals Panel

The National Education Goals Panel was created two years ago through a joint agreement between the White House and the National Governors' Association. In September 1989, President Bush and the nation's governors reached agreement at an education summit held in Charlottesville, VA, that the United States should have common education goals. The six National Education Goals, announced in February 1990, state that by the year 2000:

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn.
2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
3. American students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.
4. U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
5. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
6. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

In July 1990, the National Education Goals Panel was formed. The Panel has evolved over the past two years to be an independent, bipartisan body composed of eight governors, two members of the President's administration, and four members of Congress. Its purpose is to:

1. decide how progress toward the goals might be measured;
2. establish baseline data to determine how close the nation and individual states already are to the targets set for the end of the century;
3. monitor and report national and state progress toward the goals each year; and
4. recommend improvements to existing data and assessment systems so that more complete and more precise measures of progress can be reported in the future.

The Panel has decided to report each September, through the year 2000, on the progress the nation and individual states have made toward achieving the National Education Goals (National Education Goals Panel, 1991, 1992).

National Standards and Assessments

Two of the six goals (Goal 3: Student Achievement and Citizenship, and Goal 4: Science and Mathematics) are primarily concerned with increasing current levels of U.S. student achievement. At present, the only nationally representative assessment system which can be used to monitor U.S. student achievement in English, mathematics, science, history, and geography is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). However, NAEP was never designed to judge what students **should** know and be able to do. It was designed simply to describe student performance in relation to other students at the same age or grade level.

Given the lack of explicit national standards specifying what students should know and how well they should know it, the Panel proposed during early deliberations that national standards and a national system of assessments linked to those standards should be considered as a means of measuring progress toward Goals 3 and 4. In light of increasing talk about national standards and President Bush's subsequent call for national achievement tests, Congress established a temporary National Council on Education Standards and Testing (or the Council) in June 1991, to advise Congress and to assure broad participation by the public in discussions about the desirability and feasibility of national standards and testing in education.

The Council stressed that there should not be a single test, but a system of multiple assessments ... The assessments should be voluntary, not mandatory, and should be developmental.

The National Council on Education Standards and Testing was composed of 32 members, including educators, researchers, assessment specialists, business representatives, governors, state legislators, and members of Congress. In order to carry out its work, the Council formed eight task forces of nationally recognized education experts to produce background papers and to inform the Council's deliberations. The Council completed its work in December 1991 and issued a final report to Congress in January 1992 (National Council on Education Standards and Testing, 1992).

The Council and its task forces were asked to address three questions:

1. Are national standards and a system of assessments desirable?
2. Is it feasible to develop national standards and a system of assessments?
3. How are national standards and a system of assessments to be developed and implemented?

What is Meant by National Standards?

One of the fundamental assumptions of the Council was that over time the U.S. educational system had drifted to a minimal skills curriculum with low expectations and that it was unlikely that student performance would improve substantially without demanding standards. The Council (1992, p. 13) proposed that four kinds of national standards were both feasible and desirable:

1. **Content standards** that describe the knowledge, skills, and other understandings that schools should teach in order for students to attain high levels of competency in challenging subject matter;
2. **Student performance standards** that define various levels of competence in the challenging subject matter set out in the content standards;
3. **School delivery standards** developed by the states collectively from which each state could select the criteria that it finds useful for the purpose of assessing a school's capacity and performance; and
4. **System performance standards** that provide evidence about the success of schools, local school systems, states, and the Nation in bringing all students, leaving no one behind, to high performance standards.

The Council (1992, p. 3) specified that these standards should have five characteristics:

1. Standards must reflect high expectations, not expectations of minimal competency.
2. Standards must provide focus and direction, not become a national curriculum.

3. Standards must be national, not federal.
4. Standards must be voluntary, not mandated by the federal government.
5. Standards must be dynamic, not static.

In addition, the Council concluded that in order to determine whether American students were competent in challenging subject matter, a national system of assessments should be created. The Council stressed that there should not be a single test, but a system of multiple assessments developed by states, individually or in groups, which are linked to the national standards. The Council also stressed that the assessments should be voluntary, not mandatory, and should be developmental so that they can accommodate new developments in measurement and assessment.

If all students are expected to meet exacting national standards, then schools must ensure that all students are given opportunities to receive high quality instruction and to learn challenging core content.

Setting Standards Equitably

Congress acknowledged from the Council's inception that equity was a critical issue in any discussion of standards and assessments. Congress specifically asked the Council to address "whether support that would provide educationally disadvantaged children, handicapped children, and children with limited English proficiency the opportunity to succeed should be a part of any effort to implement national education standards" (House Committee Report 102-104, HR 2435).

Equity was also at the heart of many spirited Council debates and public hearings pertaining to the desirability and feasibility of national standards and assessments. Some of the arguments against national standards and assessments were as follows:

1. It is simply impossible to establish national standards in the United States because it is not possible to reach consensus on what all students in a culturally diverse nation should know.
2. National standards will further widen the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students, particularly if standards are accompanied by high stakes assessments that directly affect students' life choices (high school graduation, college admission, employment, etc.). In reality, national standards will penalize students with special needs because they will have to go farther than others to meet the standards.
3. Talk of national standards raises fears that the additional resources that students and schools will need to meet increasingly demanding levels of performance will not be forthcoming.
4. States have no consistent manner in which limited English proficient students are assessed on statewide or district-level minimum competency examinations. Furthermore, there is an extensive history of test misuse and abuse concerning linguistic and cultural minorities. It is highly unlikely that a system of national standards and assessments will correct these problems, since testing decisions are still made at the state and local levels.

Competing arguments were also proposed in favor of national standards and assessments:

1. Experience in California shows that it is possible to reach consensus on what culturally and ethnically diverse students should know and be able to do, as

evidenced by the engaging curriculum frameworks the state has adopted in mathematics, social studies, and science.

2. High national standards and demanding assessments will actually promote equity—if all students are expected to meet exacting national standards, then schools must ensure that all students are given opportunities to receive high quality instruction and to learn challenging core content.
3. Too often, special programs designed to help students with special needs (e.g., special education, bilingual education, Chapter 1) are designed as pull-out programs that operate independently of the regular school system, with separate curricula, instruction, and expectations. National standards and assessments would ensure that special programs reinforce opportunities for students to perform to their highest abilities on common content that all students are expected to learn.

In its final report to Congress, the Council concluded that although setting standards and assessing diverse populations of children equitably would be a formidable challenge, national standards and assessments were both feasible and desirable. How this might be done was not specified. In the following section of this paper we present four possible alternatives for consideration, along with potential advantages and disadvantages of each.

Four Possible Ways that Standards Could Be Set

One standard for everybody

By far the simplest way to set standards is to establish the same standard for all students, regardless of special needs. The chief advantage of this approach is uniformity. The presumed desirable effect is that "national standards applicable for all children will help provide the impetus for realizing equality of educational opportunity across the Nation" (National Council on Education Standards and Testing, 1992, p. E-6).

The most serious disadvantages to this approach are that (a) it may not be possible to reach consensus on a single standard for everyone; and (b) holding all students to the same standard without regard to differences in school resources and opportunities to learn places an enormously unfair burden on students.

Same standard, different conditions

A second way to approach standard setting is to hold all students to the same standard, but to allow the conditions needed to reach the standard to differ (for example, by allowing students more time to reach the standard, by employing alternative instructional methods, or by allowing students to demonstrate mastery of content in their native language). The advantages of this approach are that (a) it still guarantees that students will be held to mastery of common content, and (b) it still holds schools accountable for teaching all students essential skills and knowledge.

This approach has the added advantage of being more equitable than the first alternative, since it acknowledges that some students may need additional time or accommodations to reach the standard. Moreover, it is consistent with the Council's (1992, p. 10) admonition that "students with disabilities or limited English proficiency should be provided opportunities to learn and to demonstrate their mastery of material under circumstances that take into account their special needs."

The arguments against such an approach are primarily technical. It is simply easier to monitor student progress by assessing and reporting what students know by certain benchmarks (e.g., by the end of fourth grade, eighth grade, and twelfth grade) than to attempt to monitor progress at varying points in time. Second, there is no guarantee that special accommodations will ensure more equitable instructional and assessment practices, since this will depend on how well these individual decisions are made. Third, accommodations such as allowing students more time to reach the standard or assessing students in their

native language may not necessarily solve educational inequities. Simply allowing more time will not equalize the effects of poor instruction or lack of opportunity to learn. And assessing students in their native language may prove to be counterproductive in some cases, since content instruction for most students after fourth grade or so (even in bilingual education programs) tends to be in English.

Different standards for different groups

A third approach is to abandon the notion of a single standard of performance and set different standards for different groups. The chief advantage of this approach is its flexibility—standards could be custom-designed to accommodate the needs of different groups, as well as to accommodate differences of opinion on what all students should know and be able to do. Geisinger (1991, p. 46) proposes that such an approach be considered for statewide minimum competency tests:

> There may be circumstances in the use of minimum competency examinations where it is appropriate to employ a different standard as the passing score than is used in the general population. In some instances, LEP students have already been identified for special test administration procedures such as being excluded from taking the examination altogether on the basis of an [Individualized Education Program] or a similarly institutionalized policy, bypassing the first test administration for which they are eligible, having the test administered in their native or first language, or taking an alternative measure. Under such circumstances, it may also be appropriate to use a different passing score in the recognition that their more limited English skills inhibit their best performance.

The primary disadvantage to this approach is that it could result in attempts to create "separate but equal" standards which establish lower expectations for some groups of students and alleviate schools of their responsibility to provide equal educational opportunity.

Exclude some groups from assessment altogether

The fourth alternative is to exclude some groups of students from national standards and assessments altogether. In fact, a precedent for this approach already exists. In the past, large-scale assessments such as NAEP excluded limited English proficient students and those with special education placements from participation. Some who favor this approach argue that it is better to exclude special education and LEP students from assessments altogether than to expose them to unfair testing practices that could penalize or stigmatize them.

"The major problem with this approach," as pointed out by the Council's Assessment Task Force, "has been that these students are then placed 'outside of accountability.' A more inclusive approach towards assessment is needed if equity concerns are to be respected" (National Council on Education Standards and Testing, 1992, p. F-8).

Current Attempts to Set National Standards

Clearly, determining how standards should be set for students with special needs and how these populations of students might be assessed equitably are questions that will take considerable thought and much more public discussion about what we want the nation's students to achieve. Whether these questions will be addressed now, while standard setting is underway, or later, after standard setting decisions have already been made, is a critical issue.

Mathematics standards were already announced by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in 1989 (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989). In addition to the mathematics standards, federal funds have recently been allocated for "World Class Standards Projects" to develop standards over the next two to three years in six other content areas:

1. **Science** - $3 million from the U.S. Department of Education to the National Academy of Sciences;
2. **History** - $1.6 million (including $66,000 in non-federal funds) from the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities to the National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California, Los Angeles;
3. **Arts** - $500,000 from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities to the Music Educators National Conference in consortium with the American Alliance for Theatre and Education, the National Art Education Association, and the National Dance Association;
4. **Civics** - $705,000 (including $200,000 in non-federal funds) from the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts to the Center for Civic Education and the National Council for the Social Studies;
5. **Geography** - $820,000 (including $120,000 in non-federal funds) from the U.S. Department of Education and the National Endowment for the Humanities to the National Council for Geographic Education in collaboration with the Association of American Geographers, the National Geographic Society, and the American Geographical Society; and
6. **English** - $360,500 from the U.S. Department of Education to the National Council of Teachers of English, the International Reading Association, and the University of Illinois Center for the Study of Reading.

Each of these standard setting projects is forming, or has formed, advisory groups to develop curriculum standards, teaching standards, and assessment standards. The advisory groups include representatives of educational and professional associations within the field. The National Committee on Science Education Standards and Assessment, for example, includes liaisons from a number of organizations representing minorities in science, such as:

- American Indian Science Engineering Society
- Association of Mexican American Educators
- Association for Women in Science
- Foundation for Science and the Handicapped
- National Organization of Black School Educators
- Science Association for Persons with Disabilities
- Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science
- Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
- Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists

One would expect these representatives to be especially sensitive to the issues we have raised about equity in standard setting and assessments. One would not necessarily expect the science group to reach the same conclusions as the history group, the arts group, or the geography group, however, unless there was a concerted effort to direct their attention to these issues and offer recommendations from the field. Should uniform guidelines be suggested to these groups? Would this be an appropriate task for participants in this symposium?

A State Attempt at Setting Standards: The Delaware Experiment

Our collective national and state efforts to institute standards-based approaches to educational reform must provide for in-depth conversations on issues of educational excellence and equity. Too often, as

pointed out earlier, these public discussions have come after standards are already determined and new assessment instruments are already developed.

Delaware, along with numerous other states, has come to the realization that our educational health is at the heart and core of our state's economic security. There is a readiness to invest in our children. It is our professional responsibility to ensure that our responses to this policy opportunity are well crafted to effect the systemic and coherent reformation of our schools toward excellence and equity for all children.

The success of standards-based approaches or strategies of educational reform, such as those incorporated in the National Council on Education Standards and Testing's proposal, the efforts of the World Class Standards Projects, and parallel state initiatives, will depend on three key components.

First, a compelling vision statement must be articulated that incorporates a set of guiding principles to provide clarity and direction to the vision of teaching and learning that is expected. We must translate our vision statement—for Delaware, excellence and equity for all students—into operational statements that can guide our curricular framework commissions and our standards and assessments development partnerships.

Second, meaningful and ongoing opportunities for parent and community involvement in the reform effort must be created from the outset. Let us not forget we are committed to enhancing the performance of the American Common School or Public School and its unique charter that resides in its connections to our citizens and communities.

Third, extensive and continuous staff development experiences must be scheduled throughout the reform's implementation by all educators. Said another way, we must view and sell these reforms as human capital investments.

We at the state level must ensure that our efforts to develop curriculum frameworks that incorporate rigorous and challenging subject matter and "world-class" standards of performance will be undergirded by firm commitments to staff and student development in order to ensure excellence and equity for all students and staff. We should loudly proclaim our beliefs that all children can learn at significantly higher levels, and that all teachers can teach.

Neither is a present reality, but fairness demands that our concomitant emphasis be on human capital development of all clients and our staff. However, a distinguishing feature of today's reform is the focus on clear expectations of quality learner outcomes and the associated pedagogical and content understandings required to effect these results. The criterion of success must be enhanced student learning for all children.

Delaware's Reform Plan

In May 1992, the Delaware State Board of Education adopted New Directions for Education in Delaware, a plan for educational reform designed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in collaboration with groups from local school districts and the private sector (Forgione and McCann, 1992). New Directions is a "standards-based" approach to educational improvement. This reform agenda clearly defines a strategy of educational standards and related assessments and accountability that will define the nature of educational change needed if Delaware students are to be prepared for life in the 21st century. The strategy is based on the conviction that to improve our schools significantly we must answer three complex questions:

1. What is it that students must know and be able to do?
2. How will we know when students have accomplished the task?
3. What are the best ways to enhance student learning?

Figure 1 Delaware's Curriculum Frameworks

GIVENS		SUGGESTIONS	
A WHAT/WHEN Content Standards	B HOW WELL Performance Standards	C HOW (for Students) Learning Events	D HOW (for Teachers) Teacher Practices
Standards will be Universal		Instruction will be Individual	

Translating the first two questions into language more relevant to education, Delaware educators are now asking themselves:

1. What should be the content and performance standards that all students must master?
2. What types of assessment should be used to measure accurately what students have learned?

Designing, developing, and implementing content standards and student performance standards, along with meaningful tools to assess how students, teachers, and schools perform against them, are Delaware's starting points for solid and sustained progress in reforming the state's public schools. Curriculum Frameworks, which will be designed and developed initially in mathematics, science, English/language arts, and social studies, will provide the scaffolding for the New Directions agenda. Delaware's Curriculum Frameworks can perhaps best be visualized by the diagram in Figure 1.

Content standards (Box A in Figure 1) will define what Delaware students must know and be able to do at specific benchmark levels, such as by the end of grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. Delaware's content standards for mathematics, science, English/language arts, and social studies will be developed over the next two to three years by 45-member Curriculum Framework Commissions, comprised of teachers, administrators, school board members, higher education faculty, national content experts, parents, students, and representatives of the community.

Once developed, these content standards will be universal. In other words, all Delaware schools and districts will be expected to design their local curricula so that the kinds of knowledge, skills, strategies, attitudes, and understandings described in the content standards are taught. Delaware's content standards will not be minimal standards, but rather will describe the levels of accomplishment that students need to acquire if they are to attain high levels of competency in a particular subject area.

Performance standards (Box B in Figure 1) will establish the degree or quality of student performance required to demonstrate various levels of competency in the subject matter set out in the content standards. Student performance standards will consist of concrete tasks and explicit definitions of what students have to do to demonstrate that they have learned to an adequate level the skills, strategies, and knowledge framed by the content standards.

Currently, there are very few examples of concrete performance standards for elementary and secondary school students in Delaware and in the nation. Three examples that offer us some guidance in building student performance standards are the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) examinations, Connecticut's Common Core of Learning Performance Assessment tasks, and the New Standards Project development work in literacy and mathematics. AP examinations provide national models for student assessment that are tied closely to course descriptions, performance-based examinations, and professional development activities for teachers. They also provide opportunities for students to undertake college-level study while still in high school. "Exploring the Maplecopter," a task which was developed by the Connecticut Common Core of Learning Performance Assessment Project, provides a concrete example of a performance-based assessment task that will help Delaware educators with the development of student performance standards. This task assesses students' ability to design and carry out their own experiments for the purpose of gaining new knowledge. It requires students to work both individually and in small groups and clearly specifies the criteria on which student work will be evaluated. Finally, the tasks and scoring criteria that are being developed jointly by Delaware teachers and teachers from across the nation as part of the New Standards Project exemplify both the characteristics embodied in good performance assessment tasks, and the processes Delaware educators will need to engage in during development of student performance standards.

Our question to this audience is whether there is sufficient consensus among this community of scholars and practitioners to answer these questions now or in the near future. We would urge the Center for Applied Linguistics to continue to play a leadership role in convening more symposia of this type to ponder and debate these issues.

The four Delaware Curriculum Framework Commissions (English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) will work interactively with the Delaware Educational Research and Development Center at the University of Delaware and Delaware State College to design, develop, and establish student performance standards. Like the content standards, student performance standards will be universal.

Learning Events (Box C in Figure 1) and Teacher Practices (Box D in Figure 1) will be individualized and exemplary. Some types of student activities and teaching strategies will likely be more effective than others in helping students meet the standards. Therefore, in addition to having universal content standards and student performance standards, Delaware classroom teachers will be provided with suggested learning events and teaching practices to help them help their students meet the performance standards. A variety of learning approaches will be shown to help teachers meet the needs of all students

and to help teachers design their own classroom activities. Deciding how best to enhance student learning is the implementation part and will be addressed principally at the local district level by education professionals closest to the classroom (e.g., teachers, principals, superintendents, and local boards of education).

To assist in implementing New Directions in Delaware public schools, networks of districts and schools, as well as subject matter professionals, will be formed to help one another in devising successful instruction that guides each student to the established mastery levels of performance. Currently, Project 301 links mathematics teachers and specialists in each of Delaware's 170 public schools and 131 non-public schools. Similarly, the New Directions partnership (among the 19 Delaware school districts) is establishing networks of School Partners—Teacher Teams and Parent Teams. This mechanism is intended to link the work of the Curriculum Framework Commissions and school-level reform efforts.

Delaware now has the opportunity to lay the foundation for decades of solid, sustained educational progress. With the New Directions reform strategies and agenda, Delaware can establish expectations that will lead the state and its young people to greater reward and progress. And in the process Delaware can become a model for the nation.

Questions for Further Discussion

We return to our original premise. That is, as each of the state and national projects that we have described moves forward to establish content and student performance standards, they will all eventually have to grapple with the same issues:

1. How should standards be set for students with special needs?
2. Should disadvantaged students or those with limited English proficiency or disabilities be held to the same standards of performance as other students?
3. Are different accommodations needed to assess different groups of students fairly, and if so, what would those accommodations be?
4. What assurances are needed that the national drive to achieve higher standards, more rigorous curricula, and more demanding assessments will not be attained at the expense of students who have not had the same opportunity to learn challenging subject matter?

Our question to this audience is whether there is sufficient consensus among this community of scholars and practitioners to answer these questions now or in the near future. We would urge the Center for Applied Linguistics to continue to play a leadership role in convening more symposia of this type to ponder and debate these issues.

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Authors' Note

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Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of members of the National Education Goals Panel.